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SUBJECT: NPP CANDIDATE CRITICIZES KUFUOR'S INFLUENCE OVER
CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESS

Classified By: Ambassador Pamela E. Bridgewater for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In an October 31 meeting with POL Chief, New Patriotic Party (NPP) presidential candidate Dan Botwe urged foreign donors to provide more support to political parties, complaining that Ghana's strong presidential system left other democratic institutions, including political parties, parliament, and regional assemblies, dangerously weak. He criticized the NPP's selection process, including efforts by President Kufuor to influence the NPP's choice, and said some delegates have been bought off to support favored individuals. He also warned that if the NPP selects an Ashanti - the ethnic group of Kufuor and rumored Kufuor favorite Alan Kyerematen - for the second straight time, the party will face a serious backlash from non-Ashanti Ghanaians when it comes time to vote. END SUMMARY.

NPP Internal Dynamics

¶2. (C) POL Chief met October 31 with NPP presidential candidate Dan Botwe. Botwe served as Minister of Information under Kufuor until 2006, when he was removed from his position in a cabinet shuffle, and served earlier for two years as NPP General Secretary. He complained that the candidate selection process for the NPP has been extremely expensive and that the use of money in this process has created the perception among the public that the NPP is corrupt. Botwe said there has been widespread bribery of potential delegates and that this "epitomizes" the level of corruption among the party's political leadership. Botwe said he worried that this is causing serious disaffection among voters and is damaging the party.

¶3. (SBU) Botwe also noted that the campaign has been very time consuming and that many of the current candidates who were ministers began campaigning for the nomination in 2005, and as a result neglected their government duties. (NOTE: In early 2007, Kufuor forced all ministers who were planning to run for president to resign their posts. END NOTE.) Botwe also said that some former ministers had sponsored the elections of many constituency, regional and national office holders, who now have a say in the NPP candidate selection.

¶4. (C) Botwe was highly critical of President Kufuor's involvement in the NPP candidate selection process, commenting that if the NPP is to win the 2008 presidential race, Kufuor should refrain from attempting to influence the process. He claimed Kufuor is financing the campaign of former Trade Minister Alan Kyerematen through corruptly obtained funds, and that this effort is undermining the NPP's internal democratic process. He said friction between the

party and the government is increasing ahead of the December 22 party conference and will continue if Kufuor continues to openly support Kyermaten.

15. (C) According to Botwe, there is a strong sentiment among NPP activists that the party should select a non-Ashanti. Electing another Ashanti to succeed Kufuor, said Botwe, "will play into the hands of our opponents" and cause trouble for the NPP in the general election. Botwe added that the dominance of the NPP by Ashantis has been a major concern for non-Ashanti party members, and that the party would be best served by selecting a non-Ashanti with strong party credentials (implying that he has those qualities). Botwe himself is from the Guan ethnic group in the Eastern Region.

NPP-NDC Tensions

16. (SBU) Commenting on the highly negative relationship between the NPP and the main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Botwe said relations will remain polarized as long as former President Jerry Rawlings remains influential in the NDC. He opined that Rawlings' role will diminish if the NDC loses the election, paving the way for a more constructive relationship between the NDC and NPP. However, he commented that the upcoming election would be difficult for the NPP, and likely very close.

Botwe's strategy

17. (SBU) In his own campaign for the nomination, Botwe is focusing his attention on NPP delegates who will determine the party's nominee. He contrasted that with other candidates who are spending money on public relations and posters, targeted toward members of the public who will have no say in the NPP's decision. Botwe noted that he has strong support among party activists due to his credentials as a long-time NPP insider and former two-term party General Secretary, going back to his student days.

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18. (SBU) Botwe said the NPP needs to rekindle its basic values as a party, including setting clear priorities that will translate into good government that serves "ordinary Ghanaians." He noted that Ghana has had strong macroeconomic performance under the NPP and has gained significant respect among its regional and international partners, and that the next government must build on that legacy.

Governing Philosophy

19. (SBU) Botwe said he was concerned that the strong executive presidency has weakened the role of political parties and parliament. He prefers a parliamentary system of government with strong parties, and called for increased foreign donor support for Ghana's political parties. This will better check the executive, and help combat patronage and corruption, as well as foster decentralization. Botwe described Ghana's legislature as very weak and "sycophantic." Botwe added that he favors greater decentralization of government power, and direct election of District Chief Executives, which, he opined, would increase the effectiveness of District Assemblies, foster greater grassroots activism, and combat patronage and corruption.

Comment

110. (C) Botwe's comments illustrate the growing perception in Ghana of significant internal tensions within the NPP. His remarks on the possibility that the party will again select an Ashanti are consistent with what we have heard from other political observers, and suggest that internal NPP divisions could persist into the 2008 election year should the party select Kyermaten as its flagbearer at the December party

congress. Should these divisions continue, and remain in the public eye, it will certainly strengthen the hand of Ghana's opposition. END COMMENT.
BRIDGEWATER